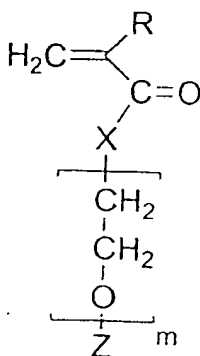


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims below replaces all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Previously Presented): Water-swellaable sealing composition comprising a matrix formed by rubbers and a particulate material having a particle diameter of from 5 to 5,000 μm distributed therein,

wherein the material comprises a crosslinked polymer composition which comprises at least one polymer in which the content of monomer units derived from nonionic hydrophilic acrylates or methacrylates makes up at least 30 mol%, wherein the nonionic hydrophilic acrylates or methacrylates correspond to the general formula



wherein R = H or a methyl group, X = O or NH, m = 3 to 1,000 and Z = H or a C₁-C₄-alkyl radical.

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2. (Previously Presented): Sealing composition according to claim 1, wherein the rubber is vulcanized or crosslinked to form an elastomer or vulcanized rubber.

3. (Previously Presented): Sealing composition according to claim 1, wherein $m = 5$ to 200.

4. (Previously Presented): Sealing composition according to claim 1, wherein an open-pore foam structure having a density of from 0.4 to 2 g/cm³ is present.

5. (Previously Presented): Sealing composition according to claim 1, wherein the material has an average particle size of from 100 to 800 μm .

6-8. (Cancelled).

9. (New): A method of using a sealing and absorption material, comprising:
subjecting said sealing and absorption material to a plurality of wet-dry cycles, said wet-dry cycles including wetting said sealing and absorption material in electrolyte-containing water and drying said sealing and absorption material;
wherein said sealing and absorption material comprises a water-swellaable sealing composition according to claim 1.